

TWICE-A-MONTH MAGAZINE SECTION

The Fire-Warden

(Continued from page 3.)

He strove to look remorseful, but he only grinned.

"I did not suppose you cared," she said, severely, but made no motion to rise.

Presently he mentioned the mare again, asking if she really desired to sell her, and she said that she did.

"Then I'll wire to-night," he rejoined. "There should be a check for you day after to-morrow."

"But suppose the man did not wish to buy her?"

"No chance of that. If you say so, the mare is sold from this moment."

"I do say so," she answered, in a low voice, "and thank you, Mr. Burleson. You do not realize how astonished I am—how fortunate—how deeply happy."

"I can only realize it by comparison," he said.

What exactly did he mean by that? She looked around him; he was absorbed in sawing a hole in the pine needles with his pocket-knife.

She made up her mind that his speech did not always express his thoughts; that it was very pleasant to listen to, but rather vague than precise.

"It is quite necessary," he mused aloud, "that I meet your father."

She looked up quickly. "Old business with him?"

"Not at all," said Burleson.

This time the silence was strained; Miss Elliot remained very still and thoughtful.

"Ethans," he said, "that this country is only matched in paradise. It is the most beautiful place on earth!"

To this astonishing statement she prepared no answer. The forest was attractive, the sun perhaps brighter than usual, or was it only her imagination due to her own happiness in seeing The Witch?

"When may I call upon Mr. Elliot?" he asked suddenly. "To-night?"

No, really he was too abrupt, his conversation flickering from one subject to another, without relevance, without logic. She had no time to reflect, to decide what he meant; before crack! he was off on another trail—and his English no vehicle for the conveyance of his ideas.

"There is something," he continued, "that I wish to tell you. May I?"

She sat her lip, then laughed, her gray eyes searching his. "Ask it, Mr. Burleson, for if I lived a million years I'm perfectly certain I could never guess what you are going to say next."

"It's only this," he said, with a worried look. "I don't know your first name."

"Why should you?" she demanded, amused, yet instinctively resentful. "I don't know yours, either, Mr. Burleson, and I don't even ask you!"

"Oh, I'll tell you," he said; "my name is only John William. Now will you tell me yours?"

She remained silent, smiling with a candor that she had not met with since she went to parties in a muslin frock. She remembered one boy who had proposed elopement on ten minutes' acquaintance. Burleson, somehow or other, reminded her of that boy.

"My name," she said, carelessly, "is Constance."

I like that name," said Burleson.

It was pretty nearly the last straw. Never had she been conscious of being so spontaneously, so unreasonably approved of since that wretched boy had suggested flight at her first party. She could not separate the memory of the innocent youth from Burleson; he was intensely like that boy; and she had liked the boy, too—liked him so much that in those ten heavenly minutes' acquaintance she was half persuaded to consent—only there was nowhere to fly to, and before they could decide her nurse arrived.

"If you had not told me your first name," said Burleson, "how could anybody make out a check to your order?"

"Is that why?" she began, and with the slightest reason her heart gave a curious little tremor of disappointment.

"You see," he said cheerfully, "it was not impertinence—it was only formality."

"I see," she said, approvingly, and began to find him a trifle tiresome.

Meanwhile he had confidently switched to another subject. "Phosphates and nitrogen are what those people need for their farms. Now if you prepare your soil, do your own mixing, of course, then begin with red clover, and plough."

Her gray eyes were so wide open that she stopped short to observe them; they were so beautiful that his observation continued until she colored furiously. "It was the last straw."

"The fire is out, I think," she said, calmly, rising to her feet; "my duty here is ended, Mr. Burleson."

"Oh, are you going?" he asked, with undisguised disappointment. She remained here in silence for a moment. How astonishingly like that boy he was this instant!

"Of course I am going," she said and wondered why she had said "of course" with emphasis. Then she smiled to her more.

"May I ride with you to the house?" he begged, hopefully.

She was going to say several things, all politely refusing. What she did say was: "Not this time."

Then she was silent with herself, and began to hate him fiercely, until she saw something in his face that startled her. The mare came up, she flung the bridle over hastily, set foot to metal, and seated herself in a flash. Then she looked down at the bare bridle, her prepared for his next remark.

"It came of course. When may we ride together, Miss Elliot?"

She became strangely indulgent. "You know," she said, as though instructing youth, "that the first proper thing to do is to call upon my father, because he is older than you, and he is physically unable to make the first call."

"Then by Wednesday we may ride?" he inquired, so guilelessly that she broke into a peal of delighted laughter.

"How old are you, Mr. Burleson?" he asked.

"I feel younger," he said.

"So do I," she said. "I feel like a little girl in a muslin gown." Two spots of color tinted her cheeks. He had never seen such beauty in human guise, and he said very near saying so. Something in the aromatic mountain air was tempting her to recklessness. Unconscious, exhilarated by the temptation, she sat there looking down at him; and her smile was perilously innocent and sweet.

"Once," she said, "I knew a boy like you when I wore a muslin frock, and I have never forgotten him. He was extremely silly."

"Do you remember only silly people?"

"I can't forget them; I try." "Please don't try any more," he said.

She looked at him, still smiling. She gazed off through the forest, where the men were going home, shovels shoulder'd, the blades of axe and adze blood-red in the sunset light.

How long they stood there she scarcely reckoned, until a clear primrose light crept in among the trees, and the evening mist rose from an unseen pond, floating through the dimmed avenues of pines.

"Good-night," she said, gathered bridle, hesitated, then held out her ungloved hand.

Galloping homeward, the quick pressure of his hand still burning her palm, she swept along in a maze of disordered thought. And being by circumstance, though not by inclination, an orderly young woman, she attempted a mental reorganization. This she completed as she wheeled her mare into the main forest road; and, her happy, disordered thoughts rearranged with a layer of cold logic to quiet them, reaction came swiftly; her cheeks burned when she remembered her own attitude of half-sentiment intimacy with this stranger. How did he regard her? How deeply did he already hold her—this young man riding here in the forest for his own pleasure?

But she had something more important on hand than the pleasures of remissive cogitation as she rode up to the store and drew bridle, where in their shirtsleeves the prominent citizens were gathered. She began to speak immediately. She did not mind matters; she enumerated them by name, dwelt coldly upon the law governing arson, and told them exactly where they stood.

She was, by courtesy of long residence, one of them. She taught their children, she gave them pills and powders, she had stood by them even when they had the law against them—stood by them locally and in the very presence of Sheriff, facing with him at every move, combating his brutality with deadly intelligence.

They collapsed under her superior knowledge; they trusted her, based on her, whined when she rebuked them, censured themselves more severely for a day or two when she dropped a rare word of commendation. They respected her in spite of the latent, rather protect which meets at women; they treated her as a parish priest's priest; they loved her as they loved one another—which was rather toleration than affection, the toleration of half-tamed beasts.

And now the schoolmarm had turned on them, turned on them with undisguised contempt. Never before had she betrayed contempt for them. She spoke of cowardice, too. That bewildered them. Nobody had ever suggested that.

She spoke of the shame of jail; they had hitherto been rather proud of it; all this seated there in the saddle, the light from their store lamp shining full in her face, and they handled them on the veranda, gaping at her, stupid.

Then she suddenly spoke of Burleson, praising him, endowing him with every quality the nobility of her own mind could compass. She exalted his patience under provocation, bidding them to match it with equal patience. She bade them be men in the face of this Burleson, who was a man to display a dignity to compare with his to meet his squarely, to dead fairly, to make their protests to his face and not whisper either behind his back.

And that was all; she swung her mare off into the darkness; they listened to the far gallop, uttering never a word. But when the last distant hoof-stroke had ceased, Mr. Burleson's life and forests were safe in the country. How safe his game was they them-

selves did not exactly know.

That night Burleson walked into the store upon the commonplace errand of buying a jack-knife. It was well that he did not send a groom; better still when he explained, "one of the old-fashioned kind, the kind I used as a schoolboy."

"To whittle willow whistles," suggested old man Santos. His voice was harsh; it was an effort for him to speak.

"That's the kind," said Burleson, picking out a notebook. Santos was a schoolmarm; presently Burleson looked around.



Sunshine Special

Fast, Superb, All-Steel Train

St. Louis or Memphis and
Dallas, Ft. Worth, El
Paso, Houston, Galveston,
Austin, San Antonio

Out of St. Louis at
Sunset—Into Texas
at Sunrise

Out of Memphis at 10:15 p.m.

Write for Booklet



C. L. STONE
Passenger Agent
St. Louis, Mo.

FURS

Highest spot cash prices for furs of all kinds, also hide-and-roots. No commission charged. Honest grading. Square treatment. You get every single penny that's coming to you. Old-established reliable fur houses. Unlimited facilities.

TRAPPERS

If you have traps, ship them to us at once, dry or live, free traps and shipping tags. But act quick.

ROGERS FUR CO.

Dept. 701 St. Louis, Mo.

LEARN TO RUN-BUILD & SELL AUTOMOBILES WE SET YOU UP IN BUSINESS

Owne a Garage and Repair Shop! Make from \$3,000 to \$10,000 a Year!
The Automobile Industry is the Big Business of Today and has an unlimited future. Why not get in on the ground floor? We will give you personal instruction at the Best Cost. **INVESTMENT** is \$1,500.00. You can have an Automobile and Tools. Training is given in the evenings. **ADMISSION** is \$10.00. **Capital** will furnish the capital for a business of your own. **CONFIDENCE** is given in your ability to make good as the proprietor of a Garage and Repair Shop. No other school has the financial ability to make such a wonderfully generous offer.

OUR COURSE INCLUDES FARM TRACTOR ENGINEERING.

Former Tractor Experts make big money as do Chasewares, Mechanics and salesmen. **INVESTMENT** is \$1,500.00 per man and wife and son. You can do as well with C. A. T. Training. The demand for tractors is great. Many experts are in the supply. We could easily place 500 more graduates right now if we had them.

BIG FREE BOOK obligates you in no way, but you owe it to yourself to get all the facts. Don't let others monopolize prosperity; get your share. Make the start now by sending a letter or a postal card.

Colvin Automobile Institute,

Dept. 27 St. Louis, Mo.